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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an overview of the Elazar classification system for libraries of Judaica. The authors of the scheme contend that there was and is a need for a system for libraries of Judaica to classify and arrange their collections according to Jewish concepts based upon Jewish thought and terminology. Topics covered include: (1) initial development and the first edition; (2) revision and the second edition; (3) revision and the third edition; (4) spelling authority; (5) the problem of having to use another system for general works in libraries that combine Jewish and general collections; (6) important features; (7) unique usage/expansion of the system; and (8) a summary of the philosophy behind the Elazar system. (MES)

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The making of a classification scheme for libraries of Judaica

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Abstract

The authors of the scheme contend that there was and is a need for a classification system for libraries of Judaica to classify and arrange their collections according to Jewish concepts based upon Jewish thought and terminology. This paper describes the history of ***A Classification System for Libraries of Judaica*** *it's development, the process involved in preparing the 2nd and 3rd revisions, and its use in various libraries.Keywords: Librarianship, Libraries, Classification, Judaica*

Paper

Introduction

I would like to dedicate this paper to my brother, Daniel Elazar, co-author of A Classification System for Libraries of Judaica, who succumbed to cancer last December. He devoted much of his life to Jewish scholarship, books and librarianship all which were extremely important to him. May his memory be blessed.

This paper will discuss the publication A Classification System for Libraries of Judaica. It will cover its historical development along with the philosophy

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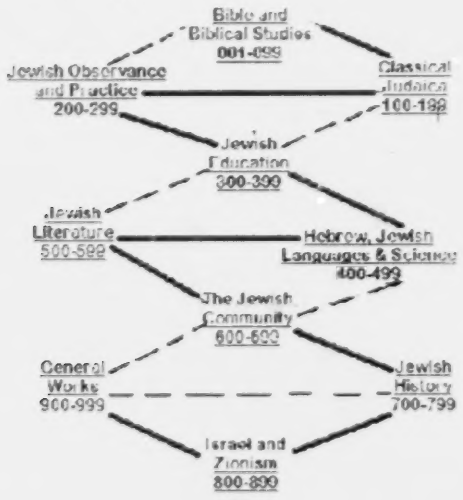
behind it, reinforced by the role the Jewish library community played. Reasons for making changes within the various editions will be dealt with along with examples. Pros and cons of the System will be discussed and examples of unique uses will be mentioned.

Initial Development and the First Edition

In 1950, Daniel Elazar, took on the task of organizing the library (approx. 10,000 vols.) at the United Hebrew Schools (UHS) in Detroit, Michigan (USA). As he pursued this task, he came to the conclusion that there was a need for a classification system for classifying and arranging Judaic collections according to Jewish concepts based upon Jewish thought and terminology. He saw the existing classification schemes, i.e. LC and Dewey, incorporating the Bible, Judaism and Israel into a general, non-Jewish world of knowledge without relating Jewish and Jewish oriented subjects to each other. The UHS, serving elementary, high school and college students, teachers on all levels, and the Jewish community at large, was an ideal setting to test a classification system to organize the published and unpublished literature of Jewish Civilization. He decided upon a decimal system, dividing it into ten major classes:

001-099 Bible and Biblical Studies
100-199 Classical Judaica: Halakhah and Midrash
200-299 Jewish Observance and Practice
300-399 Jewish Education
400-499 Hebrew, Jewish Languages and Sciences
500-599 Jewish Literature
600-699 The Jewish Community: Society and the Arts
700-799 Jewish History, Geography, Biography
800-899 Israel and Zionism
900-999 General Works

Scheme of Interrelationships - Nonlinear Primary and Secondary Relationships



In 1952 the first draft was prepared. For 9 years the System was tested in the UHS environment, including general circulation, college-level research, juvenile services, and pedagogical development. In 1962, the System was copyrighted

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and a mimeographed draft version was circulated for comment and criticism with the assistance of the National Foundation for Jewish Culture. During those development years I, a high school student, worked with the System, running one of the branch libraries of the UHS elementary schools. Upon graduating with a MALS degree from the U of M, I was appointed head librarian of the UHS/Midrasha Library. Daniel and I then sat down working to professionally refine the System from both aspects of librarianship and Jewish scholarship. In 1968 we applied for and received a Faculty Grant-in-Aid from Wayne State University to assist in preparing the final draft, many sections of which had undergone major revisions. This grant made possible the typing of the final manuscript, which we submitted to the Wayne State University Press for publication. The Press distributed it to various Judaic catalogers in large academic institutions for comments and recommendation. They did not see the need for such a System as most of them were using the Library of Congress classification system and did not understand the needs of the small to medium special libraries of Judaica. Their recommendation to the Press was not to publish the System. We then turned to Dr. G. Flint Purdy, director of the Wayne State University Libraries. He was very impressed with the work and in the summer of 1968, authorized the Libraries to publish and distribute the first edition.

Since the publication of the first edition, use has spread widely throughout the United States, Israel, and other parts of the Jewish world. Libraries of all kinds, in synagogues and community centers, in Hebrew schools, on university campuses, and in research institutes, have adopted the scheme and have worked with it. As a result of the combined efforts of many of these institutions, a wealth of experience in applying the System has developed. Credit must be given to the Association of Jewish Libraries of Southern California for the role it played in the post publication development of the System. Dorothy Schroeder, known as the "dean of Jewish Librarians in L.A." and her proteges, Barbara Leff, Adaire Klein and Marjorie Gersh were very influential during this period. As a result of their dedication to the System, 1) most of the Jewish libraries in California adopted it, 2) it was used successfully by professionals and non-professionals, 3) a glossary of terms was developed for those less fluent in Judaica, and 4) a course on cataloging and classification (*Elazar*) was taught at the Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles.

Revision and the Second Edition

Feedback from librarians using the System influenced our decision to proceed with the second revision in 1978 (Turtledove Publishing, Israel) and with a reprinting including an Addendum in 1988 (Center for Jewish Community Studies in Jerusalem and University Press of America). Initially revisions introduced were designed to keep reclassification down a minimum. Modest changes were made in various sections, including, (a) clarifications, (b) changes in terminology, and (c) updating historical events. Correspondence between the authors and the librarians was most interesting, thought provoking for both sides, and very constructive. The librarians reported difficulties in distinguishing literary materials and materials discussing literature on one hand, and in fitting the materials into the detailed periodization scheme, on the other. To overcome this difficulty, the category on Jewish Literature (500-599) was revamped totally, creating a situation where librarians had to reclassify, but in return receive a product which was easier to handle. The 1988 addendum included corrections and additions to both the System and its index.

The following are examples of some of the changes that took place:

001-099 Bible and Biblical Studies

- Better distinguish between types of Biblical Commentaries
- Better accommodate Bibles in different forms
- Clarify the classification of materials dealing with life in Biblical times

200-299 Jewish Observance and Practice

- Sections were designed to make explicit reference to particular texts, customs, ritual objects and folklore elements
- English translations were added to Hebrew terminology i.e. 221.3 Mikveh (Ritual bath)
- Comparative religion was expanded by request of librarians who maintain general works in their collections

500-599 Jewish Literature

While the first edition was divided by time periods, the second edition was divided by region/ethnic background and forms of literature, i.e. Sephardic poetry, with a section for anthologies and individual works. These major changes were incorporated in close coordination with the librarians who used the System.

600-699 The Jewish Community: Society and the Arts

- This category had certain problem areas making classification of materials difficult.
  The areas were identified, subjects were added, terms were changed for clarity without major reclassification.

> ***650*** *Social Conditions and Problems; the addition of abortion, birth control, aging, euthanasia, environment, etc..*

800-899 Israel and Zionism

- Updated

> ***823*** *Statehood (1948 -); clarified and brought up to date*
> ***843*** *Party System, Parties; expanded to include types of parties*
> ***890*** *Israel and the Middle East; expanded to include Palestinians, peace efforts, terrorism, refugees.*

Revision and the Third Edition

A few years later, Rachel Glasser and Rita Frischer, two professional librarians from California and enthusiastic users and promoters of the System, approached the authors suggesting that a new edition is needed, which, with their assistance, was published in 1997 (Milken Library of Jewish Public Affairs and Jason Aronson, Inc.). Subjects were added and certain categories (History and Israel) updated as required. The index was expanded to make it more useful and accurate.

The task of revising the 3rd edition was quite different from that of the 2nd one. The authors worked very closely with Rachael and Rita (credit given on the cover and title page of the published book). This was made possible by the new era of e-mail. E-mail messages sped back and forth between Israel and California. Each section, including the expanded index, of the classification system was examined, discussed, and finalized. The completed copy was proof read on both sides of the world before being sent to the publishers.

From the onset it was agreed upon that no major changes would be made in the 3rd edition as were made in the 2nd, with the aim to keep reclassification down to the bare minimum. The following are some of the changes made.

563 - *Fiction, Short Stories* (2nd) was changed to *Short Stories* (3rd) with a note to the user that individual works of fiction be shelved in a separate section of the library, arranged alphabetically by author. Rita and Rachel suggested this change after polling librarians and users of the System.

Notes (clarification)

620 - *Jewish Political Structure and Governance* (2nd) This section includes materials on Jewish National and communal self-government, excluding Biblical and modern Israel, and including quasi-governmental organizations, such as Jewish federations and community councils where they exercise relevant functions.

(3rd) Including materials on Jewish National and communal self-government (excluding Biblical and modern Israel), democracy in the Jewish community, and modern quasi-governmental organizations, such as Jewish federations and community councils.

Index (expansion and clarification)

Falashas 790.1 (2nd edition)

Falashas (Ethiopian Jews), see Beta Yisrael (3rd edition)

Beta Yisrael (Ethiopean Jews) 790.1
Customs (social) 610
Literature 502
Liturgy 233

Correspondence between parties (example)

832-839 *Land of Israel* (Major Regional Headings)

Librarians' (user) feedback:

At this point, we run into problems with the changes in Israel of geographical and political boundaries, names of settlements and/or cities which have been established since the scheme was set up, and those that have changed their status. Revising this area **(832-839)** is a major job. What do you think? And if we decide to do this, what authority list can we use? How about towns now under Arab rule, or disputed territories? We need to be practical as far as the usefulness of this area, yet accuracy is most important. What do you sugges?

Authors' response:

There have been political changes regarding the State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, but the geography of Eretz Yisrael (Land of Israel), has stayed the same. Change the note to read: 832 …subdivide country (Eretz Yisrael) regionally… (2nd edition …subdivide country regionally)

Spelling Authority

The first and second edition used *The Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, edited by Cecil Roth, as the authority. For the third edition the multi-volume *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Keter, 1972) is used. There are certain exceptions; for example, for names of organizations and persons, the accepted spelling is that used by the person or organization. There have been few modifications, as the intention of the authors is to bring the spelling of Hebrew terms into conformity with accepted standard usage. Thus, letters with a "dagesh" are doubled (e.g. Shabbat), where ever doing so conforms with common usage. The authors were not concerned with differentiating between similar sounding Hebrew letters as is done in some transliteration systems.

Jewish/General Collections

According to reports from librarians, the major disadvantage of *Elazar* is the fact that material with no specifically Jewish content, has to be classified under another system, thus creating a situation where the user (most cases Jewish Day Schools) has to learn two systems. Throughout the development and revisions of *Elazar*, the authors have been aware of this problem, but contend that this is a classification system for collections of Judaica, and that the advantages of having such a system over shadows any problems in having to use another system for general works. *Elazar* includes categories on Comparative Religion, General Education, Psychology, the Middle East, General Reference Works, and Library Science for material which is not Jewishly oriented, but important to any Judaic/Pedagogic collection. Suggestions are included in the chapter "Classifying a Book - General Materials". For example, it is recommended that the library use the prefix "D" for material classified with Dewey and shelve the books in a specified area..

Important Features

Librarians who use *Elazar* emphasis two very important features:

1. The logical arrangement of books on the shelf, from a Jewish point of view, making it easy for use and browsing.

   Here is a brief anecdote to illustrate: "*I converted my library collection to Elazar more than 25 years ago because my mentor... considered it the best for synagogue libraries. My rabbi confirmed this not long after that, when he came into our library to browse. I asked him if I could show him around and he said,* ***"What for? Everything is here -- just the way I think about Judaism -- it's all in order for me!"*** I've never forgotten his response, and I've found again and again that materials arranged by *Elazar* are logically 'in order.' (HASAFRAN 12 Oct 1995)

2. The System serves as an educational tool for those (librarian and patron) who are not well versed in Judaism, using Jewish/Hebrew terminology with cross references in the index and categorizing according to Jewish historical periods (see examples below).

   Terminology with a Jewish/Hebrew Orientation

Brit Milah is cross-referenced from the word "circumcision"

Eretz Yisrael (Land of Israel) is used instead of "Palestine" , a name imposed upon the area by the Romans to disassociate the land from the Jews when they were expelled.

The use of *BCE* (before the Christian Era) and *CE* (the Christian Era) instead of BC and AD, respectively.

Historical divisions based upon Jewish historical events:
720*Emergence of Talmudic Judaism (5th Century BCE - 8th Century CE) including overall treatment of the Jews in the Greco-Roman period which is further divided:*
721*Second Commonwealth (538 BCE-135 CE)*
727.3*Jewish Roman War and its aftermath (66 BCE-132 CE)*

Unique usage/expansion of the System

In 1975 an Orthodox College in Jerusalem decided to use the *Elazar* classification for their Judaica section instead of the original 200 Dewey class or Sholem's 296 and 933, as the librarian put it, "intricate classes". They simply put a 2 before the *Elazar* numbers, and translated the text to Hebrew. For example 003 became 200.3 . They were obliged to make modifications because of the introduction of the digit "2" before the numbers. They also put the Mishna before Talmud Bavli, and deleted or modify some of the classes that were inadequate for their library. Some numbers were added especially in the sections dealing with Jewish Law and customs.

In 1998 I was approached by a member of the Library Committee of a 60,000 volume library. He wrote that the library was currently in the midst of a long, ongoing process to reclassify the Library from the Friedus System (ref 8) to LC. Most of the active Committee members, Rabbis and scholars, are very displeased with the LC system, which is not intuitive or orderly (from their perspective). He stated that he only recently became aware of the existence of *Elazar* which seems to be much more reasonable for a library intended primarily for Rabbinics and advanced Talmudic and Halachic (Jewish Law) studies. In the months to follow there was much discussion on the pros and cons of *Elazar* with the librarian wanting to continue reclassifying to LC. This could make a very interesting case study whereby the librarian was interested in conforming to what other large libraries with Judaic collections have done, i.e. use LC, while the library users wanted a System which is Jewishly oriented for their convenience and ease of use. The decision of the Committee was to keep Friedus for all Judaica holdings and to subdivide major areas of the collection (Bible, Rabbinics, etc.) using *Elazar* classifications as subcategories.

The authors, believing that a classification system should be a "living" tool, have always encourage librarians to:

1. continue the dialog of giving suggestions and getting advise, and
2. to make minor changes as it fits their needs. One such example is the expansion of the Nazi Holocaust category for a collection requiring more detail in this particular area (ref. 5).

Barbara Leff (former Library Director, Stephen S. Wise Temple) sums up the philosophy behind the *Elazar* System (Hasafran 12 Oct 1995) replying to a question on LC vs. *Elazar*.

Because LC Classification is standard in academic libraries does not mean it is BEST for ALL libraries. To you, LC is standard; to me, *Elazar* is standard! A small library's primary goal is to reach its audience -- to make libraries accessible to users, especially browsers. That's what *Elazar* does for us and other synagogue libraries.

As you know, LC classification system was created for the entire body of world knowledge with an arbitrary numbering scheme and complex, lengthy numbers; most Judaica items fall in LC's BM and BS categories. As an alternative, *Elazar* was created for Jewish educators, synagogues and schools; its numbering system is modeled after Dewey Decimal and is in a logical sequence following the development of Judaism. Also, *Elazar* devotes all 000-999 numbers to Jewish topics, resulting in simper call numbers - making it easier for use by children and non-academics.

...*Elazar* is great for browsing -- and browsing is what lots of adults and children as well as teachers do in our kind of library. Computers and online catalogs do not replace walking through a library and browsing the shelves.

Another reason I like *Elazar* is because I learned an overview of Judaism through the *Elazar* scheme (as a library volunteer with limited library knowledge for 10 years prior to getting my masters). *Elazar* pulls the Judaica body of knowledge together in its outlines and explanations. *Elazar*'s logical sequences and orderliness allows a non-schooled library person to acquire a valuable understanding of Judaism, and, as you are aware, many synagogues ask volunteers or librarians with minimal Judaica background to manage their libraries. Also, non-professional librarians could not possibly handle the many LC cataloging tools in order to catalog their books. *Elazar* is a single, slim volume, easy to handle and use, and indexed.

Candidly, I have often thought of the additional time, energy and money involved in doing original cataloging -- because this is translated into budget. As a director of a large synagogue and day school library, I'm very concerned about cost-effective management. In addition to *Elazar*, we have a Dewey-cataloged secular day school collection in the same room, which means TWO classification systems to manage, requiring even more cataloging time. So, on the surface it might make sense for us to adopt the more readily available LC system for both secular and Judaica into one system -- but I think the patron has to come first.

One of the early drawbacks of *Elazar* was the lack of a central cataloging system. Professionals and non-professionals were compelled to do in-house cataloging and classifying. With the advent of the Sinai Temple (Los Angeles) Central Cataloging Service (CCS) for Libraries of Judaica, a very important tool complementing the *Elazar* System became available. The CCS is a subscription provider of *Elazar* and Weine (ref. 9) classification and cataloging, a service allowing librarians using *Elazar* to obtain professional cataloging on a continuing basis. CCS also helps with retrospective conversion information, provides back mailings, supplies a comprehensive Subject Heading List, giving a choice of over 100 topical bibliographies all of which include complete *Elazar* cataloging data.

Conclusion

The making of *Elazar* has been a life time project. It has given me the opportunity to maintain a professional contact with the Jewish library community while at the same time make a contribution to the profession. While it is used mainly in the U.S.A., it can be found all over the world. The System has been discussed and written about in various circles (ref. 2, 3, 4, 7).

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